

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: George Houghtailing, 79, planner and civil engineer

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George Houghtailing, part-Hawaiian, was born on June 11, 1905, in Honolulu, Oahu. The third child of Eliza and William Houghtailing, George grew up in Kapalama--in the vicinity of the street that now bears his family name.

He attended St. Louis College, graduating in 1925. Soon after graduation, he continued his education at the University of Dayton where he was awarded a degree in civil engineering. In 1929, he returned to the islands and secured a position with the City and County of Honolulu. In the next twenty odd years, he rose from engineer to the Director of City Planning.

Now semi-retired, George has been in private practice as a planner since 1957. He is currently a consultant for Community Planning, Inc.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

George Houghtailing (GH)

January 30, 1984

Downtown Honolulu, Oahu

BY: Michiko Kodama (MK)

MK: This is an interview with Mr. George Houghtailing at his office in Downtown Honolulu, Oahu on January 30, 1984.

Okay. Mr. Houghtailing, can we begin today's interview by telling me when you were born?

GH: Yes, I was born on June 11, 1905 at the Kapiolani Maternity Home which was located at what is now the end of Kalakaua and Beretania Street.

MK: At that time, how many children were in your family? Your brothers and sisters?

GH: I had two older sisters in the family.

MK: Are you the youngest in the family?

GH: I'm the youngest of the three.

MK: What were your parents' names?

GH: My mother's name was Eliza Houghtailing. My father was William Lewis. (Mother and father divorced.) I was adopted by my uncle, Benjamin W. Houghtailing when I was sixteen months old. Mother and Dad had separated.

MK: We've always heard about the Houghtailing name because of the street and also because of some historical works. What do you remember about your family's background, especially your paternal grandfather?

GH: My grandfather came out of Hudson, New York and migrated to San Francisco during the gold rush, and then came to Hawaii around 1845, and was married to my grandmother about 1850. My grandfather had what they call an inn, but what was known as a saloon at the corner of Bethel and Hotel Street. The name of the inn/saloon was the Bay Horse Saloon. They occupied an area of around fifteen

acres on Houghtailing Road which they farmed and used for agricultural pursuit. My grandmother was from Kauai, and she was full-blooded Hawaiian. My grandfather was of Dutch ancestry.

MK: And those fifteen acres that your family had in the Kapalama area, would you know how they acquired that large acreage?

GH: Excepting that by looking at the maps, it evidently was acquired in a number of kuleanas (and/or parcels and) consolidated in land court. At what time and what date, I would not be able to let you know definitely.

MK: Your grandfather's family, how big was the family?

GH: That is unknown excepting for one historical data that we have that he and another brother came to Hawaii about 1845. He remained and his other brother returned. We have no indication of where he went, excepting there is a possibility that he went up in the Iowa area or thereabouts. We have traced some family of his who is living now in Seattle. And that's as far as I can recall about my (grandfather's) family background. One of the cousins is making a research on the whole family tree. I don't know how far she's gotten on it as of this date.

MK: Based on your memory of the area that you grew up in, could you please describe your home area?

GH: Well, the home area presently houses the Damien High School. It is located between School Street and Vineyard Street. On the premises (there) was a large pond which had a natural spring and which also fed the lower land where we had taro patches and cultivated the other truck gardening on the land. The land was quite open. We had a couple of bay horses (and raised chickens and pigs for family consumption. There was a large open area fronting Houghtailing Road which was used) as a park for the neighborhood (kids).

MK: You just mentioned that it was used as a park for the neighborhood, can you kind of elaborate what happened there?

GH: Yes, it's a place where the younger element gathered to play football, basketball, or whatever other activities that were part of the neighborhood needs. In fact, in the early '30s, the political rallies were held on the premises by the various political parties.

MK: Can you kind of describe for me how those political rallies were held back then?

GH: Well, the political rallies at the time were the candidates came and spoke at the rallies. They had music, entertainment at the rallies, and everybody seemed to have got to know the candidates more personally. They had music, and it was the kind of an affair that

became a part of the neighborhood entertainment during the political campaigning days.

MK: Who were the prominent politicians of those 1920s?

GH: I would say that there was Mayor Fred Wright, Johnny Wilson, Sam King. Prior to that there was Mayor Fern and Mayor Arnold. And some of the outstanding representatives like Two Gun Mokumaia and Anderson, who was the grandfather of Andy Anderson who's been running for mayor and governor. There was also others, like John Lane who was quite active in the political--he was high sheriff at one time.

MK: It seems like there were quite a few people living in that neighborhood. Can you describe for me the types of people that lived in that vicinity?

GH: Well, the types of people were more of the middle class, made up of primarily part-Hawaiians, Portuguese, and a Chinese settlement. The Chinese settlement particularly were people who were very active in taro cultivation, rice planting, (truck gardening, fruit orchards, etc. The small family merchants were located along King Street and School Street. They [operated] the markets, coffee shop, and restaurants).

MK: Can you tell me where the rice patches and taro farms were located?

GH: (The rice patches and taro patches were located in the rear, below School Street and extended to Liliha Street. There were several ponds. In later years, several of the ponds were sealed by the Board of Water Supply in order to preserve water. The area between Palama Street and Liliha Street below School Street down to what is now Vineyard Street was also planted with taro. These taro patches were still in existence in the mid-'20s, when it gave way to residential developments.)

MK: As far as you know, who were the workers on the farms?

GH: Mostly Chinese. Some of the owners were probably landlords, but the Chinese were mostly the workers taking care of the taro and rice patches, and the truck gardening. After the Chinese left the taro patches, the truck gardening was then taken over by the Japanese. That was in the (late '20s and the early '30s).

MK: You mentioned that there were also coffee shops and stores. Where were they located?

GH: Located mostly along King Street and along School Street. But mostly along King Street in the Palama area.

MK: Would you kind of recall the names of those enterprises?

GH: Well, one that I recall still probably was the Kwock Hing Store which was at the corner of King and Houghtailing Road. And then, as you



came along down towards the Kama Lane, Long Lane, Auld Lane area, there were these stores of Chinese coffee shop, small (family) markets, (and grocery stores). (These were) later taken over by the Japanese, particularly the Okinawans, if I remember.

MK: What do you remember specifically about the Kwock Hing operation?

GH: Well, it was quite a store because it (served the neighborhood). The Kamehameha School boys (patronized the store and bought) little knickknacks (on their way) back to school (after visiting or going to town). (Later,) it branched out into kind of a small market. Not a supermarket, but a market for the neighborhood. Later on, one of the children opened up a restaurant dealing with Hawaiian food. (The Hawaiian food operation is still there.) (It is) known as Helena's Restaurant or Helena's Hawaiian Food.

MK: You just mentioned that in those days, the Kamehameha School children were in that vicinity. Can you kind of describe the situation with Kamehameha Schools back then?

GH: Kamehameha School was situated (between Kalihi Street and Houghtailing Road. It extended from King Street to the area mauka of School Street) where the present shopping center is located. (Farrington High School occupies a portion of the old Kamehameha School campus.) The Kamehameha School for Girls was located just makai of King Street; it later became the site of the first low-cost housing, the Kamehameha Housing project. (Also located on the Kamehameha School campus was a church which was removed with the moving of the school. Church services for students were held in the chapel.)

MK: You know, as a youngster growing up in the area, what kind of Kamehameha School activities did you sort of see from the outside?

GH: Well, the Kamehameha School at that time dealt principally with vocational education. They went up to the ninth grade. They had machine shop, electric shop (and carpenter shops. The school was known as a military school, similar to what is now in R.O.T.C. [Reserve Officers' Training Corps]). They had their (cadets) dressed in (gray) uniforms (and were known for their military discipline and drilling). Sundays was the day that they used to set aside for parades and where the family and people in the neighborhood used to gather to watch them parade. It was quite an affair to watch these cadets parade in their uniform. They were (known as) a military school, (specializing in vocational education). When they moved up to the hill, they (expanded their) curriculum (to include college preparatory).

MK: A little while ago, you also mentioned that there were some businesses on the School Street side.

GH: Well, there were small stores, family stores, operated by Chinese families. One--I already noted--was on School and Houghtailing

[Streets]. The other one was at Pohaku Street. And then there were (other) small stores (along School Street to Liliha Street). Then Liliha Street and School Street and Liliha and King [Streets] was kind of a center where (a mixture of the) largest stores, markets (and coffee shops were located).

MK: Do you remember the names of some of those . . .

GH: No, I don't. I have a hard time recalling (the names), but I can picture (the) stores that were there.

MK: As a young boy, do you remember the development of the McInerny Tract subdivision?

GH: Yes, the McInerny Tract subdivision started around 1918, 1920 or thereabout. The upper part of McInerny Tract used to be planted with pineapple. The other part was more grazing and open areas where guavas and other natural type of fruits, like mangoes, (grew).

MK: I think during our last conversation, you mentioned that there were sugarcane fields in Kapalama.

GH: The sugarcane fields in the Palama area, ran all the way up to what would be now the Dole [cannery] parking lot and then also up to the (rear) boundary of (the Houghtailing) property. It extended above what (is) now Vineyard Street. Vineyard Street was not there during the early '20s. It was (extended and constructed) around 1926 or '27 from Liliha Street up to Houghtailing Road. Between Liliha and Punchbowl, there was always a Vineyard Street.

MK: And that cane operation, what do you know about the management . . .

GH: The management of that plantation at that time (was) the Honolulu Plantation, where the mill was located in Aiea. They (cut the cane by hand and) hauled (it) to the mill by (train). (Cane growing in the Kapalama area) phased out about the late '20s, I think. The phasing out (program took place because lands were being purchased by the federal government to expand military reservations, including the building of Hickam Field). When World War II came up, naturally all of the plantations in the (Aiea) district was, more or less, taken over by the military. In the midst of the (cane field in the Kapalama area,) in the early '30s, (the first boxing area was built and called the) "Houston Arena." (The arena was located midway between King Street and Dillingham Boulevard) on the Diamond Head side of the Kapalama Drainage Canal. (The arena was named Houston, after the then delegate to Congress from Hawaii.)

MK: So, would it be on Kokea Street or Kohou Street?

GH: It would be on the Diamond Head side of Kohou Street. Kohou is on the Diamond Head side of what is the Kapalama Canal. The streets were built later. Kohou on one side and Kokea on the other side.

MK: How huge of an arena was the Houston Arena?

GH: It was large enough to house about two to three thousand people.

MK: What do you remember about the popularity of boxing in those days?

GH: (Boxing was very popular with) Filipinos, Portuguese, and the younger part-Hawaiian boys. (They formed the nucleus of professional boxing. It was popular with the boxing fans. With the need for industrial lands in the Kapalama-Palama area, the boxing arena had to make way for industrial expansion. And, hence the building of Civic Auditorium on King Street and the Honolulu Stadium.)

MK: Were there any famous boxers that came from the Kalihi or Kapalama areas?

GH: (Yes,) there were quite a few. But I can't recall their names. That's ancient history now. I was not too much of a boxing enthusiast and fan, so I didn't follow it.

MK: Going back to your old neighborhood, how were the living conditions there? The water facilities, electricity . . .

GH: Well, electricity didn't come in till, I would say, about 1914 or thereabouts. Before that all kerosene oil and whatever fuel that was available. There was no problem. I mean, we always had enough kerosene fuel and all that to take care of the needs of the people. (Wood stove was popular. Of course, there was lot of kiawe trees available to furnish wood for the stoves.)

MK: How about . . .

GH: Water? Water was always available either through their own natural springs or through the City and County water. But we had our own water on the premises. But later, we did connect to the city water, which ran along Houghtailing Road. The pump station was built right down where it is now. The Palama pumping station at Waiakamilo and King Street (services the Kapalama, Palama and Kalihi areas).

MK: How about the roads in that vicinity?

GH: The roads were narrow (and substandard according to today's standards). But later, about the '20s, they began to improve the roads with (macadam) asphalt. The people took care of it. Houghtailing was a narrow street and then it was widened, (and improved around the mid-'20s and further improved in the '40s and '60s. It was a link between King Street and School Street. With the opening of the McInerny Tract subdivision, Houghtailing Street was extended to serve the upper area and Alewa Heights.)

MK: You know, I notice now days that Houghtailing goes down from School Street and then at King Street it suddenly becomes Waiakamilo. Could

you explain?

GH: Actually, there was a little (off-set at the intersection of Houghtailing and King Street in the early days). There was a road on the Diamond Head [side], which they called Waiakamilo (Road) after the name of the area. Then Waiakamilo (Road originally started at King Street on the Diamond Head side of) the pumping station, and then followed (an alignment toward) Dillingham (Boulevard). In later years they straightened it out (and eliminated the off-set and brought Waiakamilo to meet with Houghtailing Street at the King Street intersection.) The Waiakamilo area went all the way from King Street to what is now Nimitz Highway and to the Kapalama harbor area. It was kind of a low area (and subject to) flooding. (Several dairies were located) down in that area. And they raised pigs and (chickens) in the area. It was a low area, but then it was improved and became what is now an industrial area.

MK: You just mentioned dairies in the Waiakamilo area. Were there many Portuguese?

GH: Portuguese and part-Hawaiian families were in that area.

MK: How about the Portuguese in your neighborhood? Were there any?

GH: There was a small, little group down towards King Street, but the mixture in ours was mostly of Caucasian, part-Hawaiian, and Chinese. Then the Portuguese settlement was down toward the King Street. Now, in the neighborhood of Long Lane, Kapalama, there was an ethnic group of part-Hawaiians, Portuguese, Caucasians, and the Chinese with the stores along the frontage.

MK: During those days, what was life like with your neighbors?

GH: Life was very pleasant. They all got along together. They all helped one another. There was always a real community. Gatherings of each other, knowing and talking to each other, and then discussing problems. The area was big, the holdings of the famil[ies] were big. And there were not that many. They were not [located] too close together. So, (friendly) community spirit. (The families worked hard, sharing help with one another.)

MK: Was it an organized sort of community togetherness or an informal?

GH: Informal. There was nothing organized like you find today. It was all informal. Everybody tried to help whatever they can. But there was no community organization. It was just an informal (family, neighbor) gathering.

MK: How about schools? Where were the closest schools for the children?

GH: The school (in our area) was Kaiulani School. The other one outside of the Kapalama district was Kalihi-Waena [School]. Likeli School



was built in the '30s. The closest private school, of course, was Kamehameha School which was for the part-Hawaiians and Hawaiians. (Then) there was St. Louis, (a private Catholic school run by Catholic brothers from Dayton, Ohio. It was located at College Walk, ewa of River Street).

MK: I know that you attended St. Louis from 1913 to 1925. But prior to that, were you attending any schools?

GH: No, but as a youngster when I was attending St. Louis, I went to a Chinese[-language] school for two summers. (This was due to) the Chinese influence (and the fact the kids went to) Chinese[-language] school. I thought, well, I better go ahead and see what I can do. I went there for (two) summers, but I left after the teacher hit me on the head with a bamboo (because I did not know my lesson. As I look back, I often wonder what would have happened if I continued learning Chinese--a good question).

MK: Were you a very unusual person in not being Chinese and attending a Chinese school?

GH: Yes, I think I was one of the exceptions.

MK: What made you attend the Chinese . . .

GH: (As stated, the influence of the Chinese children, namely the Auyongs and Lows. The families required them to go to Chinese[-language] school during summer and after regular [English] school hours.)

MK: What were your parents' feelings about it?

GH: They thought it was a good thing.

MK: I know that you're part-Hawaiian and part-Caucasian. In terms of your upbringing, how much of it was a Hawaiian upbringing?

GH: Well, my family (on my mother's side leans to the Hawaiian culture). But, as far as I personally am concerned, (I did not share in that experience and was inclined to the English side of the family. My mother and my aunts) all spoke Hawaiian and they (followed the Hawaiian) culture. I did not really become a part of it. I guess I was a kind of a loner and went my own way.

MK: You mentioned earlier that your home area was a hangout of sorts for the neighborhood children.

GH: That's right.

MK: What other activities did you engage in as a child in that area?



GH: They used to use these algaroba, (kiawe), beans for cattle and (pig) feeding. There was quite a lot (of kiawe trees) on our premises. When the kiawe, or algaroba, beans were in season, we used to pick it and sell it to the different farmers that were raising cattle, horses, and pigs. That was one of the activities. (While between the ages of eleven and fourteen,) I worked as an office boy for the Mercantile Printing Company and the Benson Smith Drug Store (in Downtown Honolulu during summer and after school hours. When I was fifteen, cannery wages were lucrative so I went to work at the canneries. First as a trucker, on the platform, unloading pines from railroad cars to the canning area. Later I became a timekeeper, worked at both Hawaiian Pineapple Company, now Dole Pineapple Company, and California Packing Corporation, now Del Monte.)

MK: You know that kiawe bean collection, how much were you paid for . . .

GH: About ten cents a bag.

MK: And how big was the bag?

GH: (A normal gunny sack weighed about twenty-five pounds more or less.) They paid us ten cents a bag, but we earned quite a few dollars doing that.

MK: I remember that you mentioned that your family had some livestock on your acreage.

GH: That's right.

MK: Were they using it for subsistence or commercial purposes?

GH: Well, mostly was for subsistence, except that we did have a dairy and that dairy was for commercial purposes. We leased the land to the dairy operator, who happened to be one of the Auyong (men). They operated the dairy for commercial purposes. (My family raised) chickens [and] pigs for the family use.

MK: You know, that Auyong Dairy, did they actually milk, bottle, and deliver milk?

GH: Oh, yes. They milked, bottled and delivered. That's true. I even helped them milk cows when I was a kid.

MK: [Later, you worked downtown.] What were the more prominent stores in the downtown area back then?

GH: Hollister's Drug, the Henry May Grocery--one of the big grocery stores--C.J. Day, the Metropolitan Meat Market, (McInerny Clothing, McInerny Shoe Store, B.F. Ehlers, Liberty House, Manufacture Shoe Store, sweet shops, and other miscellaneous stores and offices.) They were all located between Bethel, the Fort Street area and King Street. Then they had the open market, which was popular. That's

down towards the present fish market, Maunakea and Aala Street area.

MK: And then, you mentioned you worked for Mercantile Publishing?

GH: Mercantile Printing Company was [involved in] (printing and) bookbinding. It was (located) on Merchant Street, right next to the old post office.

MK: I was wondering, as a child, did you have chores on that acreage?

GH: Yeah, I had to clean the yard before I took part in any activities as far as playing. Lawn mow the yard (and) clean the yard. Clean some of the chicken (and pig) pens, but after that free to (play and go to the movies, etc.)

MK: You started attending St. Louis in 1913. What did the buildings and campus look like back then?

GH: The campus they had, well, they had couple of brick buildings. Later, they built the concrete structure that housed the high school. Then they had the boarding department which had normal wood construction. They also had a music building which was wood construction. You know, St. Louis only had about five or six acres of land to house about 800 students or more.

MK: How did you get to St. Louis every day?

GH: Well, by the streetcar, which (ran along King Street). When we wanted to save some money, we would walk. And [it] wasn't a bad walk. At the time, there were quite a few prominent people. One of them, [a schoolboy who later became] Governor [John A.] Burns, used to (walk from Kamehameha IV Road). We used to join each other walking to school. He lived up in the Kalihi area.

MK: What other Kalihi boys attended St. Louis? Kalihi and Kapalama boys?

GH: Oh, there's quite a few to mention. One of the prominent Auyong family, the boys went there. There was Jimmy Goo (chief clerk at City Hall for fifty years), the Mossmans, the Beckleys, the Hoopilis, Smythe, Cocketts, Swan. Any number of 'em that were more or less of the middle-class Hawaiian, part-Hawaiian, Portuguese, (and) Chinese went to St. Louis.

MK: In those days, where did the middle-class part-Hawaiian concentrate in, in the Kalihi-Kapalama areas?

GH: I would say they were more in the Kapalama area. If you notice, some of the names of the streets are after some of the prominent people, like the Deshas, the Hoopilis, the Aulds, the Longs, and the Alulis. They all, more or less, were concentrated in the middle part of the Kapalama area. Then they later moved out into the

different districts that grew up.

MK: These more middle-class part-Hawaiian families, what sort of livelihoods did they engage in?

GH: Well, lot of them were clerks, some worked in the banks, (others in City and Territory offices,) some of them [were] lawyers, and they were businessmen. Then, also, lot of 'em worked with the power plants like Hawaiian Electric [and] Hawaiian Telephone. Then, lot of 'em were laborers along the waterfront. Stevedores. They (were) called the Hawaiian stevedores, "hui po'olā." (They were also laborers and maintenance workers with the City and County, the Territory, construction companies, etc.)

MK: How about the middle-class Portuguese?

GH: The middle-class Portuguese, you find them in the clerical work. They were also good masonry and construction people. They were the leaders in the construction [industry]--building walls or doing cement work. They were one of the first groups that really did the mason work. You see lot of their mason work still in existence, especially in the Punchbowl area.

MK: And you mentioned the Chinese were into rice planting and . . .

GH: Truck gardening (and small businesses, especially restaurants, coffee shops, markets, etc.)

MK: How about the Japanese?

GH: The Japanese didn't come till later. Leaving the plantation, they took over lot of the laboring work. They became the masons, too. They began to take over building walls and masonries, and in the construction field, (especially building residential homes.) Then they took over the restaurants, the dry cleaning work, the house-cleaning. So, they took over in the later years. I would say, they came up in around the '30s or thereabouts.

MK: During your earlier conversation, you said you remembered Mr. Ukichi Yamane peddling on his bicycle.

GH: Right, right. He had a little store in Kalihi. But he gradually bought land and accumulated land, and finally opened up a big store. And then, later years, opened up the shopping center.

MK: What do you remember about Mr. Yamane's bicycling around and peddling goods?

GH: Well, that's all I knew. He was delivering groceries and delivering whatever was needed on his bicycle. You know, it used to be that you could call the market or anything, they would have delivery services, which are no more now since the supermarket. But the old

days, where they had those little neighborhood stores, you could get what you want. Would deliver your meat or whatever right to the house.

MK: During your years at St. Louis, you would ride the streetcars. You would go down King Street. What changes did you notice in the area as the years went on and you got older and older?

GH: Well, the changes were that the people. . . . The carpentry shop, the soda works, the junk shops began to locate along King Street, because that was, more or less, (on) the transportation (route). And then, small lumberyards, household (service type of stores). There was a shōyu factory (located along what is now) Kokea Street. Japanese-operated shōyu factory. The Honolulu Junkyard was in what they call Nepa Lane (off) King Street. I think it has moved.

MK: So it got more and more industrialized?

GH: Industrial and commercial along the main drag because of (streetcar route). People can get on and off and do their little shopping.

MK: In those days, did people from the other neighborhoods come into Kalihi to do business?

GH: Oh, I think so, (especially if they thought) that they could find better bargains. There was a store at Kalihi and King Street. That was a popular store (and) was right near to the theater. See, and again, there was the entertainment areas along King Street. The theaters. Like Palama had a theater. We had one at Kapalama right next to Long Lane. It was a small, little theater, a neighborhood theater.

Then you (had) Palama Settlement which was the hub of really what would be the Palama area, where the young, wayward kids and (others) used to go. The Palama Settlement (was founded) by the Rath family. (It was) kind of a Christian project where they would take care of the wayward children and, more or less, be the center of family gatherings in the area so that there would be more [of] a Christian atmosphere (with Bible learning and recreational activities). At the Palama Settlement, there (was a) swimming pool, (a) basketball court, (and) tennis court. (Palama Settlement) was located about Dillingham Boulevard and King Street. There's a Japanese hotel there now, (I believe). (Palama Settlement) was the gathering place of the young (adults), both boys and girls. (Many outstanding swimmers were trained at Palama Settlement. They had championship teams in swimming, basketball and track. They also had outstanding barefoot football players and teams.) It brought the people together. It was a place where they took the youngsters off of the street and put them into activities. That's very wholesome. And got to be competitive. They later moved from there to what is the present site at Palama (and Vineyard Street).



MK: I've been told that in the old days Kalihi had a notorious reputation as being a very tough district.

GH: Well, they had. You know, the old days, they had the Kalihi [gang], the Palama gang, Kakaako gang, and they had the Punchbowl gang. They all had their strong people in the area. They were tough. (They tended to take care of their own areas.) They formed into a group and they used to have fist fights. They never fought with any knives or anything. They had real fist fights. They were leaders in the area and you looked up to 'em. Those leaders, if you went astray and you belonged to the district, they would go after you, too. They had a way of disciplining one another. They were fearless, you might say, to the end, but not that destructive.

MK: Earlier you mentioned that along King Street you had amusement centers like Palama Theater, Kapalama Theater, . . .

GH: And then Kalihi Theater. As I said, the hub of the activities was Palama Settlement. Then there was an athletic field. You see, Aala Street up on the upper side of King Street, there was a big athletic field where all the baseball activities (and) track activities (were played. It was located in the Aala area off of Aala Street between Kukui and Beretania Street. And then there was another field located on what is now part of Kauluwela School. They held track and minor sports events like softball. But the big athletic field activities in the early '20s moved to Moiliili Field, forerunner of Honolulu Stadium).

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Going back to your days at St. Louis, how were your years at St. Louis?

GH: Very pleasant. They disciplined us. We got out of line, they [i.e., the brothers] had a way of punishing us. Keeping us after school and then maybe missing our half-fare (rides in the streetcars) so we had to walk if we missed those streetcars. And then, (taking away recreational privileges). But I thought they did a good job as far as disciplining the students. I think some of that followed through our later years, and we probably never got over some of the discipline that they instilled in us.

MK: How was the education there?

GH: Very good. They had a good education. They had both the commercial and college preparatory [courses of study]. The commercial students, before they graduated from school, already had jobs with the big



business houses (and government offices). That went on all the way through. They would leave school in, maybe, February, while (those taking) college preparatory [courses of study] would have to stay to graduation. (St. Louis had an outstanding commercial department.)

MK: How about the college prep department?

GH: Very good. (They had outstanding teachers in science and mathematics. Some of the teachers were qualified as professors for college teaching. The graduates from the college preparatory department were acceptable to most Mainland universities and made their mark as businessmen, accountants, lawyers, doctors, and engineers. A few were appointed to the military academy--both Army and Navy--and did well.)

MK: During your days at St. Louis, what other activities besides the academic ones were you involved in?

GH: I took part in track. Not too much. (I played neighborhood football.) I also took part in what was not an interscholastic sport, but was a community sport, rowing, which is now a thing of the past. There used to be barge rowing in the harbor. Six-man crew. And they had even the scull, (and two-man barges). Some of the outstanding athletes, Duke Kahanamoku, Doc Withington, participated in rowing. It was quite a feature. (It was held on Regatta Day in) the third week in September. It was a holiday. It was actually the forerunner of what is Aloha Week. The business and the merchant people displayed their ribbons and (banners). It was quite a gala affair. All the races were held in Honolulu Harbor.

MK: The rowing, was it done by [private] clubs?

GH: (The original classic was composed of three clubs, Healani, Myrtles, and the Hilo Yacht Club.) These three clubs participated in the early days. Then they brought in the Navy. And then, the Honolulu Police Department. Then the girls' clubs were formed. The Honolulu Rowing Club and the Huinalu. There were two boat houses in the early (years up to 1920 or thereabout). One was located where Pier Two used to be, down towards the (lower) end was the Myrtle and towards the upper end was the Healani. Then they moved to what is (now) the (Coast Guard wharf).

MK: You don't see that now days at all.

GH: No, they moved the rowing onto the (Ala Wai) canal. Then it died a natural death. (Then came canoe rowing which is a major sport and participated in by many local clubs as well as clubs from faraway Tahiti and the Mainland.)

MK: When did barge racing end?

GH: Oh, I don't know. I think about the '50s (or early '60s). It finally (faded out; Ala Wai Canal did not lend itself to the barge boat racing as well as Honolulu Harbor). On Fourth of July, the races were up in Hilo. That was a big event. The clubs used to go to Hilo, and the people used to follow the clubs to go up there at the Hilo Regatta. (They traveled by Inter-Island [Steamship Navigation Company] boats.)

MK: Those must have been really spectacular events.

GH: It was. It was real competitive. The people turned out. You would see them (all decked with flower leis and ribbons) along the waterfront and wharf watching the races. Then, at night, there was a big celebration at the old Young Hotel roof garden. They had dancing and all that, (making it a gala affair).

MK: You just mentioned the [Young] Hotel's roof garden. Tell me about that place. I've heard other people mention that place.

GH: That was quite a place, a gathering place. It was THE place for entertainment or dancing and all of the social get-togethers. See, Waikiki had the Moana [Hotel], and then the Royal [Hawaiian Hotel] was built in 1927 and then the others. But the downtown area was the gathering place at the Young Hotel. Some (of the outstanding social events and) banquets (were held there). You see, during the war [i.e., World War II], they took over the Young Hotel for military (officers. That was the end of old Hawaii downtown social events).

MK: So when you were a student at St. Louis, when you had dances, where were they held?

GH: Well, some of the dances were held (at the Young Hotel. Others at the Palama Gym and Moana Hotel. The Aloha Park Pavillion was also used. Aloha Park was located in the area where Nimitz Highway extends from Kalia Road to Kalakaua Avenue. Oahu Country Club also was available. Punahou School held their dances there.) They never had it right at school because they never had the big facilities (to accomodate the affair).

MK: When you were attending St. Louis, what were your ambitions in life at that time?

GH: My ambition after getting out of school was to go to work until one of the brothers (convinced my uncle to have me continue my schooling by going to college. With my uncle's encouragement I went on to college. This was in July and I had not made application to any college. The brothers at St. Louis suggested that I go to the University of Dayton, Dayton, Ohio, which I did.) There was quite a few of us who went there. At the time we were there, there were about twenty or thirty of us.

MK: At the University of Dayton, what did you notice as the biggest difference between Dayton and Hawaii?

GH: Well, naturally the racial group. I mean, they were a different culture. But you soon meld because it wasn't too much of a change. And the weather. And naturally, you see the different activities. Some of the industrial type of development, like the Delco, the Frigidaire, and all that, began, too. It was all in that Ohio area. The people, though friendly, were not, maybe, as understanding in some of the areas as we were. But on the whole, I didn't find too much of a change. I seem to acclimate very easily with them. Some of my best friends are still people that I went to school with, especially those that I went to school with when I went to Yale.

MK: I know that you got a degree in Civil Engineering.

GH: That's right.

MK: How did you decide to go into (the profession of civil engineering)?

GH: Well, I'll tell you how I decided. I think I can remember. They were doing some surveying on Houghtailing Road when I was in my sophomore year (at St. Louis). I said, "Maybe I'd like to be a surveyor." But it never dawned on me that I would go (to college). Then I went (on to college and) decided (to go into the field of engineering and surveying).

MK: And then, you came back to Hawaii in 1929, and you started working for the city.

GH: For the City and County of Honolulu.

MK: I was wondering, why did you come back to Hawaii and not stay up there on the Mainland?

GH: I think when you go away and when you look at the living [in] Hawaii and living on the Mainland, you find that there's no place to live better than to live in Hawaii as far as climate, (and the people--the association and mingling with the various nationalities). Probably, if I was looking back, under today's conditions, I think I could have just as well stayed away. For a while I did think of going to South America to work right after I graduated. You see, (I graduated from college) just about the time of the depression. But I was glad I came back (and opportunity presented itself for me to work at the City and County and work my way up from rod man, draftsman, project engineer, and Director of City Planning.)

(Today, our modes of transportation have changed and permitted people to move where opportunities for work and raising a family presented itself. So you find a big population moving from the east and south, etc. to the west. However, with population growth, congestion takes place.)

[But,] Los Angeles was a nice place to go to even in the '40s. I remember going when I went back to Yale. I stopped in Los Angeles. It was not crowded. But today, it's all changed. Because of the social and economic conditions). Naturally, industry has a lot to do to bringing people.

We changed out here, too, because of our modes of transportation. I think the airplane changed our whole way of life out here, bringing people closer together. Then, statehood brought the business world closer. Air transportation (was and is the source of communication that brings the other parts of the world closer to Hawaii). And naturally, our climate, (the people), and the way of life, (have contributed to the influx of people and growth).

MK: So, back in '29, you came back home?

GH: Yes, (it) took about ten days, to get home, too. You know, six days on the boat and about four days on the train.

MK: That's a trek, then?

GH: Right. (It was not easy to come home with a travel time of ten days.) Not like the kids coming home today for Christmas. Not those days, you stayed there. I was lucky I came home in '27. And coming home in '27, I believe, was very fruitful because I happened to, during the summer, go to work with a civil engineering firm, Wright, Harvey & Wright (and met one of the owners Fred Wright) who later became mayor of the City and County of Honolulu in 1930.

MK: So, you knew him from that time?

GH: Right.

MK: I know that you served in city government from 1929 to 1957?

GH: Right.

MK: Could you tell me the names of all the mayors you served under?

GH: Yes. I served under Johnny Wilson (when he was mayor in 1929). Then I served under Fred Wright, who became mayor in ('30). Then Charles Crane. But during Charles Crane's term of office, I went to Yale to do research work in '40-'41 (with traffic and planning). Then I served under Lester Petrie. (After Petrie's term of office, Johnny Wilson was re-elected and again I served under him. Finally I served under Neal Blaisdell until I resigned to enter private practice in 1957.)

MK: Six of them?

GH: Right.



MK: Six different mayors. When you first started in 1929, you mentioned it was during the beginning of depression.

GH: Yes.

MK: How was it for you?

GH: Not bad. Because I got a job. I had a job with the city. I don't think we really noticed the depression here. I don't think we did really notice. We [were] very fortunate. I think we were lucky the leaders of the (business) community (and government cooperated and assisted people in providing the necessities of life through some means of employment. We did not experience) any soup lines. We never had that problem. You could see there was hardships because of lack of work, but it was not so noticeable as what you read about (conditions on) the Mainland and (other parts of the world).

MK: What was your job with the city?

GH: When I began, at first, I was rod man and a draftsman. Then I got to be a project engineer. From a project engineer I went to the planning department, associate planning, and then became the director.

MK: When you first started, you were working under Mayor Wilson.

GH: Well, he was mayor at the time I worked in the Department of Public Works. He was mayor for, I would say, just about one year. Then Fred Wright got elected. Fred Wright (at the time of my employment was a member of the) Board of Supervisors.

MK: What were your remembrances of, say, Wilson and Wright?

GH: They were two very good mayors. Strong, very community minded. They worked for the (best interests of the) people (and government). Both of them were builders, you might say. They were engineers by trade. One graduated from Stanford, the other one was a self-made engineer. Fred Wright was self-made as a surveyor then as an engineer. Johnny Wilson graduated from Stanford. All the mayors were very strong types as far as I know. Petrie was an outstanding mayor. They were for the people, and their first concern was to build a better city. Politics was not as the way we have it today, everybody trying to please one another. Their community, the whole city, was their problem. What was good for the city was good for people; what was good for the people was good for the city. And worked in (the best interests for Hawaii).

MK: There's a housing named after Wright.

GH: Fred Wright. That's down on King (and Liliha Streets). (It was named in memory of Mayor (Fred) Wright. Because he was active in working for the underdog. In fact, during the depression we had the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and FHA [Federal Housing Administration].



He saw that the city could cooperate with the federal people in getting some money (and/or) material. During that time, they built Ala Moana Park. Ala Moana Park was nothing but a (rubbish dump area). But during that time, (Mayor Wright) cooperated with the federal government (in getting money and putting people to work. This helped to ease the pain of the depression).

MK: As you look back on your long years with the city, you've said that all of these mayors were builders of Honolulu.

GH: That's right.

MK: Could you go down the list and sort of mention some of what you think were their contributions to the building of Honolulu?

GH: Yes, I would say that Fred Wright's contribution was that he began to improve the roads (and build new ones). He began to acquire lands for (parks with emphasis on lands for beaches. Waikiki's Kuhio Beach Park is an example). He was interested (generally in public improvements that would build) a better Honolulu. (This was back in the '30s. Mayor Wright's motto was men and money at work. He carried out his program.)

Now, Johnny Wilson, I think the outstanding achievement, he was the builder of the Old Pali Road. He was quite a construction man. Now during Fred Wright's term, they also built what is Kamehameha Highway that Johnny Wilson started and then it went on, which is now the narrow Kamehameha Highway that you go on. That was built during those two mayors' time. I would say their achievements (were outstanding during the time. Johnny Wilson was for the downtrodden and was ever ready to help those in need.)

Then Petrie came in. Petrie came in (during a very trying period, World War II. He coordinated the city's program with the military. He was a fine administrator. During his administration the planning of the Kalihi Tunnel was in progress. It was built during Wilson's second administration. But he laid the foundation. I know that because I worked very closely when I was planning director in getting monies for the Kalihi tunnel and the Kalihi approach road through going to the legislature because we couldn't get any federal aid. The [Territory] was not for the Kalihi Tunnel. So, we got a sum set aside on our gasoline tax to build the Kalihi tunnel. That was done during Petrie's administration; but Wilson's administration [was] when the tunnel was built; and even finished, you might say, when Neal Blaisdell came in.

MK: So it took a long . . .

GH: Oh, there was lot of discussion and, really, disagreement. There were those that didn't think we should build the Kalihi Tunnel.

MK: What were the pros and cons about the Kalihi Tunnel back then?

GH: Well, they didn't think we needed it. There was not a traffic problem. But then, at the time, it was showing that the traffic was growing right after World War II. I remember when I came back from Yale, the ten months I went away and came back, I found the change of the traffic that was going between Pearl Harbor. You know, the trucks. Because the war was coming. And during that war period we saw the need for another outlet. But then, people didn't want to give up the land, they didn't think they needed it. (The planning of the Kalihi Tunnel was not without controversy.)

Mayor Petrie came through. During Petrie's administration the first one-way street pattern (was put into operation. He also programmed further acquisition of Waikiki privately-owned beach property for park purposes. During his administration improvement districts were formulated. All in all, Petrie's administration even though it was during the period of World War II was progressive and in the best interests of the people of the City and County of Honolulu).

MK: What was the feeling of the Kalihi community?

GH: Excepting for the piggery farmers, (the community was not vocally against the project). They said, "Well, why put the road here?" But when they finally found out the benefits a tunnel (will have to improve the communication of Honolulu with Windward Oahu, they accepted the plan. But the farmers hated the plan because it would take away their livelihood--raising hogs and chickens.) The decision was made for the benefit of the city and its people and not just the individual community.

MK: I think a lot of the Kalihi businessmen were very happy about the tunnel in the '50s.

GH: Right.

MK: They felt the whole business area would experience a boost.

GH: That's right. When you put in improvements, you uplift the whole (neighborhood and) community. I think if you look at the areas that improvements have gone in, you find that. But Kapalama has not had the improvements, outside, you might say, of Vineyard Street going through Houghtailing. They have not had really any improvements, so therefore it (is a) depressed area. And yet, it is a very wholesome area, if you look back at the people that grew (up) there. (It is too bad that owners and government allowed the area to deteriorate. Palama and Kalihi have been neglected in programs for improving the area. The owners and government should plan to improve the area. It is long overdue. I look at areas like McCully, Kapahulu, and Palolo. The city initiated the improvements and the property owners shared in the cost. In the long run, the cost of the improvements are compensated with the increase in land values. Under [Mayor] Johnny Wilson's second term, he initiated the Moiliili-McCully

improvement district, which included upgrading the roads and putting in improvements to uplift the area and make it a better place to live and do business.)

MK: I've heard people refer to the Kalihi and also the Palama areas as the stepchildren.

GH: That's right. That's what they are. But maybe it's the people/owners' fault. If you want to do something (for the Palama area, the property-owners must petition the City Council to create an improvement district and request funding like it was done in the Kapahulu area).

MK: Were you in office at the time the freeway came through Kalihi?

GH: Yes. (Vineyard Boulevard was the first major arterial planned and constructed that began in the Bingham Park area and ended at Houghtailing Street. People and landowners were against this improvement in spite of the growing traffic problem. But the City and County administration weighed the pros and cons and decided in the public interest and built it. Once it was built, the protestors remained quiet.)

Then came the freeway. (H-1. There was much discussion as to the advantages and disadvantages of this type of highway passing through built-up residential areas. Weighing the benefits and non-benefits and with automobile traffic on the increase, the answer was to build. The federal government shared in the cost. What would happen today if the freeway was not built? The answer is obvious.)

MK: What were the community's pros and cons on the freeway as it came through Kapalama and Kalihi?

GH: Well, they didn't think it was right, you were displacing 'em, how you going to take care of 'em.

MK: So, even for the tunnel and the freeway, there were pros and cons?

GH: Sure, people were being affected and were not happy. But if they were justly compensated (and other areas were available to them, they cooperated). I think that's the only thing you have to do. (You have to look at the project as a benefit for the community, people and government.)

MK: As you look back on your life in Kapalama, I know that once you got married in 1932, you moved out of the area. As you look back on your years in Kapalama, what do you feel the most about the area?

GH: Oh, I think the area was a desirable (and respected) area. It was close to the downtown area. It was a very friendly community, even though (the people) were [of] different ethnic groups. It was a group of people that understood (the needs of each other). They

were friendly, they talked with one another. I personally probably would have liked to have gone back to Kapalama. But like anything else, time marches on. You move away, then you look for other areas. So I've been up where I am now about forty-five years.

MK: As you look back on your long career with the city, what are your thoughts about your career with the city?

GH: Oh, I think it was a very informative and a very pleasant one, even though there was a lot of aches and pains along when you became the head of the department. (My years at City Hall gave me an experience of working with and for the people which is priceless.) It made me understand that people are people, and you have to look and plan for people, and work with people. Individually, (yes), we are individuals, but collectively, you look at the whole. (You plan for the interest of people and government. Government is the nerve center of the city.) It was a very rewarding career, in spite of criticism. (I learned during the years as planning director that you cannot please everybody. There will always be those favorable to a project and others against it. One just has to do what he believes in, in the best interests of the people he serves.)

I'm very thankful that I had that opportunity (to work with the City and County. The experience helped me in my career as a professional engineer, planner, and surveyor in the private sector).

MK: For the last question, as a professional planner and also as a former resident of the Kapalama area, if you had your choice, what would you like to see in Kapalama as . . .

GH: (Kapalama-)Kalihi (should maintain its) single family (atmosphere). The roads should be improved. They can improve it without maybe destroying, too. And take the Kalihi-Kai area. Lot of old families living there. But it's deteriorated. Nobody's making any improvements because the roads have not been improved.

MK: What do you think about the mix between the small industries and homes in that Kalihi-Kai area where many families in the back or . . .

GH: I think it should be replanned. They probably could, more or less, divide that industrial [area]. But, you see, those are the working families. Just like Kakaako. People own their own little homes, they live there. And probably, they still need it. But I think the area should be improved. I think that they should live up to the building code and make it. And I think it's compatible. I mean, people working and living together, there's nothing wrong with that. But it should be planned, so that whatever they do should be harmonizing with the residential as well as with the industrial. But not let it go pell-mell the way it's going now.

MK: Now as I close the interview, do you have any last comments you'd like to record?



GH: No, (chuckles) I think it's very interesting to see that someone is taking an interest in what was the past. I think from the past, we can look and build a future to continue to maintain more of a community living that is more friendly and social. I think social planning should take into consideration the (lifestyle of the community. Enough said.)

MK: Okay. Thank you, today, for the interview.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **KALIHI:**

# **Place of Transition**

**Vol. I**

**ETHNIC STUDIES ORAL  
HISTORY PROJECT**

**Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawaii at Manoa**

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